



EMBARGO: 3:30 pm

## PRIME MINISTER

22 APRIL, 1981

### SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING OF THE ANTARCTIC DIVISION HEADQUARTERS - KINGSTON, HOBART

Your Royal Highness, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to be in Kingston today to join in welcoming his Royal Highness to this part of Australia and to participate in this official opening of the new headquarters of our major Antarctic Research Agency.

Tasmania is becoming the focal point of Australia's Antarctic endeavours - and an international centre as well. The complex to be opened today has been built at a cost of \$8.9 million.

Parliament approved the proposal in October 1977 and it has been finished well ahead of schedule by a local Hobart firm, and has already won a design award for architectural excellence. All the functions of Antarctic Division are now located in a single building and a total of 107 staff will use the building including expeditioners. And I might say that while it is a research support centre for the Antarctic expeditions, special provision has been made for an historical display area to be open to the public for exhibits associated with Australia's Antarctic activities.

There are many advantages to be gained from bringing our Antarctic and related endeavours together - and especially from doing so in Tasmania, which is relatively close, and where the snowfields and wilderness areas provide ideal training grounds for staff. The Australian Maritime College in Launceston was opened last year and it is, as is well known, the "practical seamanship and fisheries training centre". Hundreds of Australian seafarers will receive both basic and specialised training at that College. Then there is the new marine science complex, which is to be the headquarters of the CSIRO Divisions of Fisheries and Oceanography.

It reflects the Government's decision to devote substantial resources to marine science.

The Marine Centre is expected to be fully operational within five years - it will have a new multi-purpose oceanographic vessel and tenders closed for this vessel last month. The secretariat of the international commission established by the convention on conservation of Antarctic marine living resources will be located in Hobart.

The concentration of these Antarctic and marine research activities in Tasmania will encourage co-operation between the people involved - and contribute more to the effective functioning of all the agencies. More than this, Tasmania will increasingly become a world centre in all these fields.

Australia's Antarctic territory is an immense area - almost as large as the Australian continent itself. Australia has a long and proud record of concerned stewardship over our Antarctic territory - it is a fragile as well as a hostile environment. Both science and bitter experience have helped human beings to survive in the Antarctic. It is my hope that it will only be science - and not bitter experience - that will help human beings to understand and manage the resources of the Antarctic. To this end, we have committed ourselves to increasing and updating the facilities at all Australian Antarctic stations - Casey, Davis and Mawson. The resulting program will be implemented over a ten year period at a cost of over \$58 million.

We are pursuing a balanced program of research in Antarctica. The Antarctic Research Policy Advisory Committee, set up in 1979 comprises top level industrial and academic research interests, together with relevant departments as observers. This Committee has completed a report of priorities, and many of its eighteen recommendations have already been implemented by the Government. In particular, the Government has accepted the notion of developing the Antarctic Division as a centre of excellence in southern ocean marine biology. In 1980-81 \$1.2 million was provided for the first stage of this program.

Australia's official involvement in Antarctic goes back to 1899, when a Tasmanian scientist, Louis Bernacchi, was a member of the first expedition to winter there. And then there were the great Australasian scientific expeditions led by Sir Douglas Mawson, in 1911, and again in 1929 to 1931. In 1936, the Australian Antarctic Territory was proclaimed, and in 1959 the Antarctic Treaty was established. In 1947, the Government established the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) which have been co-ordinated and supported by the Antarctic Division.

Our commitment has been to scientific research and to exploration. Research activity has been directed towards a basic understanding of the Antarctic environment, and the relationships between it and the global environment. Particular studies have been made of phenomena which are peculiar to the area such as changes in the earth's magnetic field. Research has also been done on the marine living resources of the southern ocean and the environmental effects of their possible exploitation. Year round meteorological observations are part of the information used in daily weather forecasts for Australia and the southern Hemisphere.

We have sought to gain a better understanding of the Antarctic, and to play a useful and constructive part in managing that environment.

Australia's Antarctic Division is now part of the Australian legend. In 35 years, it has made enormous contribution to man's knowledge and experience of Antarctica.

Australia is proud of the tradition that has been established, and that will no doubt be continued in this new headquarters.

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